

PROJECTMAGIC®

# SEARCHLIGHT SCHEDULING<sup>SM</sup>

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*Illuminate and eliminate  
the causes of weekly completion failures.*

*Without action,  
the same obstacles, the same problems,  
the same failures  
remain embedded in performance  
causing future failure.*

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**RELENTLESS RELIABILITY**

# SEARCHLIGHT SCHEDULING<sup>SM</sup>

*Illuminate and eliminate the obstacles before they impede progress*

## INTRODUCTION

Project success mandates meeting scheduled completions throughout the ebb and flow of the project. Chaos must be reduced by predictable scheduled weekly completions. Measure progress reliability weekly by comparing the work scheduled for completion to the work actually completed that week.

Effective project management attains progress reliability scores over 80%. Early measures are 35-40%. Conventional wisdom says it cannot be this bad but no one measures schedule compliance. Count the people with their hands in the work! We must confront the reality of poor productivity. Our current progress control methods contain and maintain tremendous variation. Little is predictable, dependable, or certain within a single week. We must identify and eliminate the causes of weekly completion failures. Without action, the same obstacles, the same problems, the same failures will remain embedded in future performance.

## KEY ONE: Collaborative Coordination Focused on Removing Obstacles

Collaborative means open, trusting, honest, communication dedicated to enabling work to be completed. These questions are the searchlight to illuminate obstacles preventing scheduled completions.

1. What happened last week? What was completed? What did not? What blocked those activities from completion? What was our progress reliability score?
2. What activities are we scheduling to be completed next week? Are all the obstacles preventing completion absolutely removed? Are these activities truly ready-to-work? We must only schedule activities that are ready for completion! What is the impact of our failure to reliably complete this set of activities?
3. What activities are scheduled to be completed the following week? What obstacles remain for those activities to be completed? If there are any, how did the activity reach this point with obstacles remaining? Why are we scheduling the activity for completion?
4. What activities are scheduled for completion in three weeks? What obstacles remain that will prevent these from being completed? There must not be any obstacles preventing

completion three weeks out. Why are we trying to schedule them when the completion is in jeopardy?

5. What obstacles remain for work scheduled for completion in the next four to eight weeks? What is being done to remove these obstacles? When will these be resolved? What will be the impact of our failure to achieve a high reliability on this set of activities?

6. Where will we be twelve weeks from now? What major activities will be completed? Underway? What are the priorities to make this work flow smoothly into weekly completion schedules?

Many project managers conduct meetings they believe meet these needs. Our experience is these meetings are neither collaborative nor are they focused on collectively removing obstacles. The challenge is establishing collaboration to successfully impact progress reliability. This is a major effort. It is not a one-week process! To reduce chaos, to reduce progress variation, to finish smoothly, the project team must have the will to weekly relentlessly remove obstacles!

Demons must be exorcised, excuses must be exterminated, and credibility must be underscored!

## KEY TWO: Detailed Planning and Scheduling

Detailed planning and Scheduling

1. Work is planned and scheduled to the daily level.
2. Accurate accounting of work completed.
3. Root cause analysis of work not completed and on obstacles not removed.
4. Obstacles are identified and attacked long before they impact the scheduled completion.

### Daily Planning

The team must plan and understand the project scope in terms of activities intended for completion in a single week. They often ignore this level of planning, assuming it to be the province of 'the field.' In fact, detailed planning is 'the field's' responsibility. This, too often, becomes the reason to excuse its not happening. Typically, 'the field' navigates the project minefield by touch, recoiling from the obstacles, and then searching for a way around them. This late discovery of performance obstacles creates chaos within the days and weeks of a project. In response, the project team dismisses detailed planning as not possible. On the contrary, we must plan in detail and schedule in short five-day intervals

### Accurate Accounting

Noble sounding goals like 'start on rough-in on 3rd floor' or 'complete motor control center' are not measurable. What was to be completed? What got done? We must measure what we scheduled to complete and what was completed weekly. Productivity has measurably increased as much as 25% by scheduling, removing obstacles, and measuring.

### Root Cause Analysis

Past, informal, attempts to implement reliable progress generally have crashed on the rocks of blame placing. 'I didn't get done because xxxxxx got in my way' is a constant refrain. For reliability, we must break these patterns. We must learn to eliminate obstacles in the 'deep battle area.' We, also, must resolve situations that limit our seeing obstacles or prevent our removing obstacles four to eight weeks out.

### Seeing obstacles

It has been said that the greatest improvement in the reliability of the delivery of ocean cargo came from forecasting long-term weather patterns. The ability of ships to steer around storms reduced the loss of shipping. Delivery became reliable. Clear communication about the way ahead remains crucial to projects hitting their progress targets. With this communication, the rocks looming from the surf become not objects of superhuman efforts but conditions avoided.

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